

Private Sector Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group

Tukwila, WA
July 19, 2004

Minutes

Attendees

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS

Craig Bock, Bock Consulting, Inc.
Cathy Cottingham, People Systems, Inc.
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunities Group
Patti Kacz, Intracorp
April Poier, Grant & Associates
Jill Rosenthal, RES
Scott Whitmer, Whitmer & Associates

Absent

Michael Barron, IAM Crest
Fred Cutler, Cutler Counseling
Jenny Gaffney, Gaffney Counseling & Consulting
Terry McCall, McCall Vocational Consulting

Attendees

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES

Blake Maresh
Rich Wilson
Mary Kaempfe
Don Lane
Josh Morse
Donna Spencer

Absent

Paulette Golden
Roy Plaeger-Brockway
Dave Erickson
Carol Kromer
Barb Lansford

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

James Lockhart, Seattle Goodwill

INTRODUCTIONS & REVIEW – Blake Maresh

Blake called the meeting to order. He introduced Patti Kacz with Intracorp as a new member of the VTSG. He also announced a staffing change at L & I; Carol Kromer has been the supervisor of the VDRO unit and will be taking a one-year leave of absence. Rheo (Robert) Aieta will temporarily fill the position while Carol is out and Rheo will be joining the VTSG meetings in the future.

Blake asked that all committee members introduce themselves. He then reviewed the agenda. Committee members were asked to review the minutes from the May 2004 meeting and share comments or questions. Several members commented that they did not receive the email of the minutes from the last meeting and it was determined that the distribution list needs to be updated.

DEBRIEF JUNE 4 VOCATIONAL CONFERENCE - Rich Wilson

Rich asked for a show of hands of who was at the conference. He then began his debriefing of the conference held at the SeaTac Double Tree. The partnering of IARP and IDEAS was very important and something to continue in the future. There were nearly 200 people in attendance with some vibrant speakers. There was great feedback received from the audience along with suggestions for topics for future conferences. The goal will be to have two conferences a year.

Rich then encouraged discussion from the members to comment and suggest topics for future conferences. Rich took notes of these suggestions and comments and will address them when scheduling the next conference. Most members expressed a need for an "intern-based" conference, as frequently the conference topics seem advanced for new VRCs. Examples of other proposals include "How are voc products used in adjudication?" vocational testing and testing tools, the VDRO process and dispute trends, etc.

ERTW PROJECT AND FEEDBACK FROM VTSG – Donna Spencer

Donna had a few comments to make before her presentation:

1. The Dept. of Labor & Industries has an internal group looking at vocational testing, which measures such things as best practices. Keith Klinger will be supervising the project and plans to be at the next VTSG meeting to present the findings.
2. Often times Dept. of Labor & Industries has said not to use the term "pension" because it is an adjudicative term. But that is different from "unlikely to benefit" because it is certainly a vocational recommendation.
3. Also, contact your L&I unit vocational consultant for immediate assistance if you should encounter any indications that the claim manager unduly expects you to find an injured worker employable.

The L&I ERTW (Early Return To Work) project began in March. It aims to contact workers very early in the life of a claim. Claims are identified when 14 days of time loss is noted.

Donna presented data on the project and explained the results. The data show things are moving in the right direction and that L&I is able to see from the data where adjustments can be made. Donna asked the members if they have been getting any of these referrals and opened discussion for feedback and comments. It was noted that the ability to identify, in Voc-link, referrals from the ERTW project might be helpful to VRCs.

EXPLORING ISSUE OF PROVIDERS WORKING REFERRALS ASSIGNED TO OTHER PROVIDERS – Mary Kaempfe & Rich Wilson

Mary and Rich led the members through a list of questions to capture suggestions about VRC referrals. Claims staff at L&I have difficulty, at times, contacting vocational providers assigned to referrals. Some issues have been with the phone number in the system or that a provider other than the one assigned is working the referral, though the CM is unaware of this and does not know to call the provider actually working with the worker, for up-to-date information. Along with issues of communication, there is also concern because the worker and employer can become confused about who is the responsible provider. Many of these issues can be exacerbated when the provider is geographically distant from the injured worker.

Members expressed concerns with ensuring the quality of service if they are expected to work all the referrals and at the same time train interns. There was concern expressed about being able to reach claims managers. Mary and Rich noted the suggestions and comments and will continue to discuss these issues internally and with the VTSG. Members were reminded that there is not currently an identified problem; this is a concern that is being explored for more information to determine if it needs to be addressed. Rich encouraged the members to call him with suggestions.

UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Performance Measures and Claims: Mary shared that L&I has developed a new capability on CM use of the performance ratings in making referrals. Josh Morse is working with program analysis staff and with claims staff to build the information into an existing accountability reporting system in claims. It is in the very early stages so there were no data to share.

Outcome-based Payment Update: Blake restated that there has been a proposal presented to executive management. The committee was directed back to the team for additional work, and Blake planned to meet with executives again on

July 27 with a revised proposal. His aim was to be able to bring additional information to the next meeting.

RTW Program Manager: Blake commented that the department has been considering creating a position that would be accountable for all vocational policies and activities. The intent of the position would be to improve organizational functioning and consistency of voc policy. While no firm decisions have yet been made, the department will provide additional information on this to the VTSG in the future.

Governor's WC Workgroup Update: Blake informed the members that the group had formed to work on workers' compensation issues. Because of disagreements over the agenda between business and labor representatives, the group disbanded early in the process.

VTSG LED AGENDA ITEM – Scott Whitmer

Scott requested topics, issues and ideas that could be discussed at future meetings or be presented in other training venues. He then encouraged a discussion. Some of the topics included; communication between the VRC and claims manager, SAJA (stand alone job analysis), L&I: social service agency or insurance company, and CACO as it relates to ethics. Blake printed notes of the suggestions that will be referred to in the future.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

James Lockhart commented that he is relatively new and one of his first experiences was the June 4th conference. While he did understand some topics, he felt some information was for more advanced members.

FINAL COMMENTS:

Don Lane encouraged the providers to contact the unit VSC for assistance if they have a difference of opinion with the CM when working a referral. He also commented that in terms of what L&I expects from the providers in every case is their professional, independent judgment. Recall that, ultimately, CM's need well-documented and supportable outcomes that will resolve the vocational aspects of the claim.

With no additional comments Blake adjourned the meeting at 1:00, with a reminder that the next meeting is on September 20 in Tumwater.